

STORY 13.

IN ISLAM MONEY IS ONLY A MEANS TO AN END.

THE IDEAL OF CHARITY IN ISLAM.

To a Muslim in the time of the prophet money was only a means to an end, and the highest end to which he put his money was the alleviation of suffering and the relief of the needy.

After the verse relating to alms had been revealed the companions of the Prophet who had no money in their possession used to go to the bazar, worked as porters whole days, and whatever they earned in this way they gave away as alms. In those days no Muslim ever thought of hoarding money and some of them regarded saving as a sin. This was the true spirit of socialism which did not allow any question of the distribution of wealth to arise in Muslim society. The early Muslims vied with each other in charity and gave of the best that they possessed as alms. They gave alms not for show or to win popular applause but to please God the giver of everything and to satisfy their own conscience. There was a universal desire among them to part with all their possessions for the service of God to such an extent that the prophet had to restrict this tendency.

A few incidents out of thousands illustrating this phase of early Muslim character are given below:—

1. Lady Asma had only one female slave who helped her in her domestic work. In order to get money for alms she disposed of her, and was sitting with the money in her lap, when her husband came in and seeing the money asked her to let him have it, but she refused saying that she had meant it for alms.

2. Salmaan was Governor of Madain. His yearly allowance was five thousand dinars which is equivalent to about twenty thousand rupees. He used to give away the whole sum in charity and himself lived on what he earned by making mats.

3. Once (Hazrat) Omar came into possession of a large sum of money. He thought within himself that for once he would outdo (Hazrat) Abu Baker in charity. Accordingly he took one-half of what he had, went to the Prophet and laid it at his feet. The Prophet asked him whether he had left any thing for the use of the family. (Hazrat) Omar replied that he had left an equal amount for that purpose. Just then (Hazrat) Abu Baker turned up, carrying all that he possessed and laid it before the Prophet. Just as in the case of (Hazrat) Omar the Prophet asked what he had left for his wife and children. (Hazrat) Abu Baker replied, "God and his Prophet."

4. Once (Hazrat) Omar got a plot of very good land. He came to the Prophet and said "Prophet of God I have got a piece of land which is the most valuable in my possession. Please tell me what to do with it." The Prophet said, "Give it away in charity." Upon this (Hazrat) Omar set it apart for the use of the poor, the way